

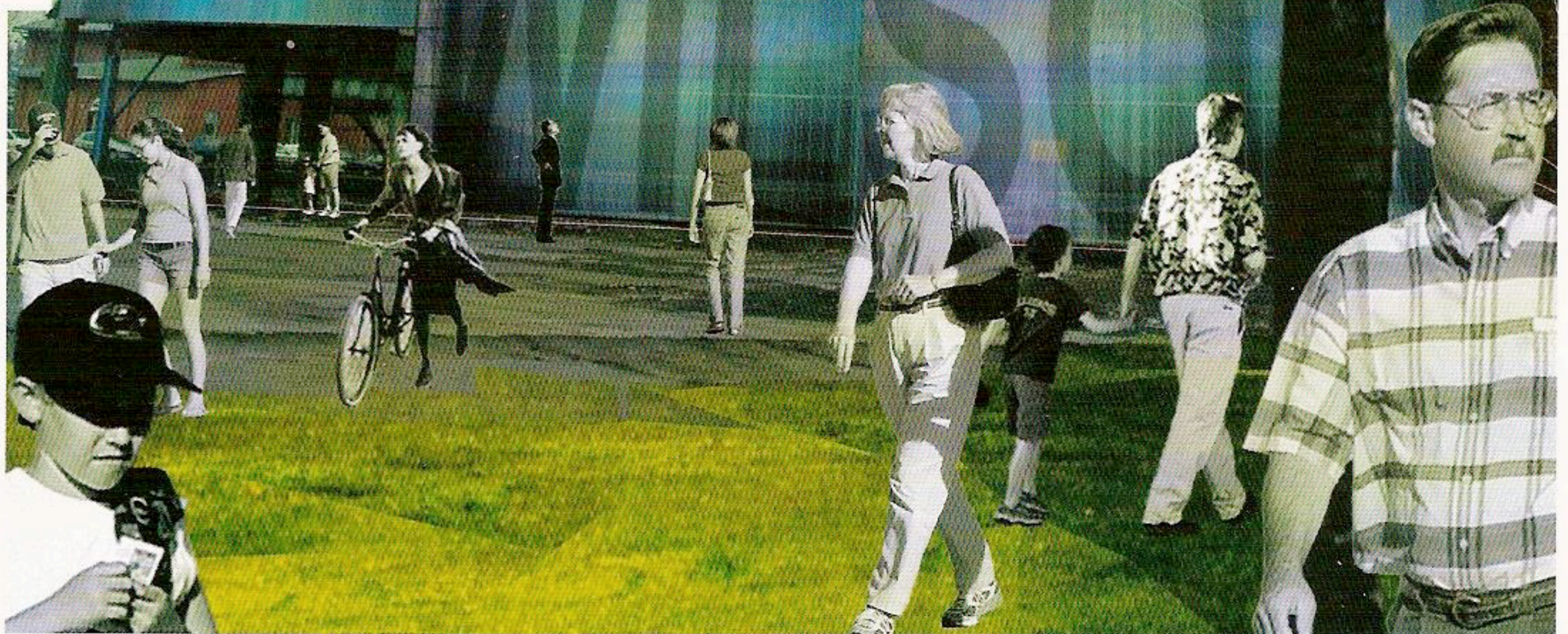
River of Dreams

— visions for modern nomads

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TEXT ■ ROD PRITCHARD-SMITH
PHOTOS ■ GANDY GALLERY

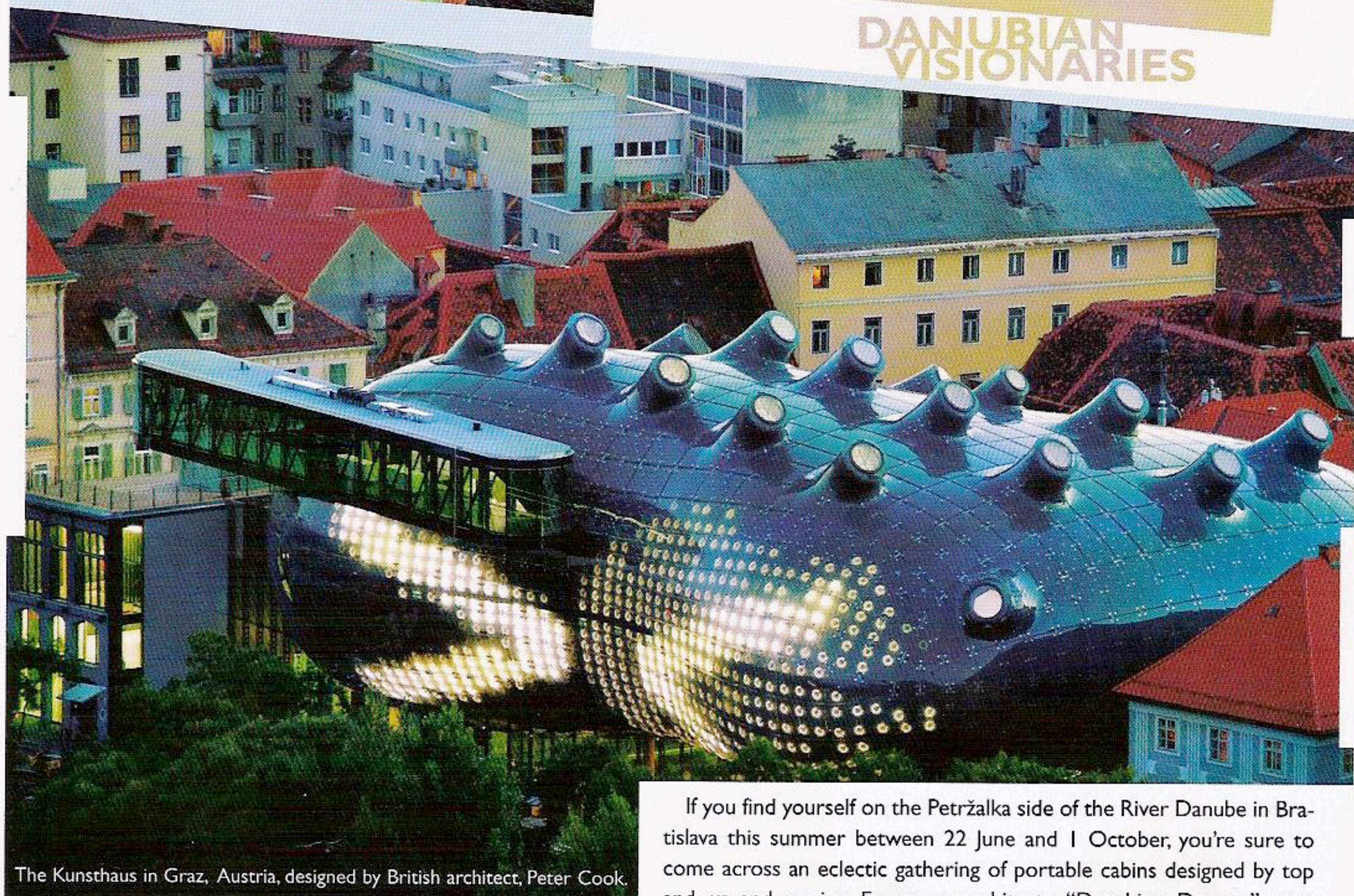
This summer the Danube embankment in Bratislava is the site for an exhibition by some of Europe's most outstanding architectural talents. The Gandy Gallery has brought together six architects from all around Europe to share their concepts for housing in the 21st century.





PETER COOK: Great Britain. Professor of Architecture at the Bartlett School of Architecture in London and highly influential co-editor of "Archigram". Previous works include the Kunsthaus in Graz, Austria and an entertainment centre in Monte Carlo. He has published 10 books on architecture including *Primer* (1998), winner of the American Institute of Architects prize.

DANUBIAN VISIONARIES



The Kunsthaus in Graz, Austria, designed by British architect, Peter Cook.

If you find yourself on the Petržalka side of the River Danube in Bratislava this summer between 22 June and 1 October, you're sure to come across an eclectic gathering of portable cabins designed by top and up-and-coming European architects. "Danubian Dreams" uses Europe's second longest waterway as the inspiration for visions of how we may live in the future. It is the brainchild of Bratislava's Gandy Gallery and leading French architect **Odile Decq**. Contributions come from France, Norway/Austria, Slovakia, Poland and Britain.

"Nadine (Gandy) and I thought it would be a good idea to have an exhibition on the Danube embankment. As a river that traverses much of Europe, it symbolises the movement of people – and people always have dreams," says Decq.

The internationally respected French architect has conceived a tepee for the show in which there is a light, a shelf for books and a packet of biscuits. "I imagined it as a place where a child goes to escape its parents – to be alone and dream. Children always need a den, a private place in which to free their imaginations." Decq added that her tepee is made up of different sections which can be reconfigured in any way. The influence of the Archigram movement is apparent in her design, just as it is in the Pompidou Centre in Paris, Decq pointed out. **Peter Cook**, a leading figure in the "Archigram" concept, also contributes his vision to Danubian Dreams.



ODILE DECOQ:

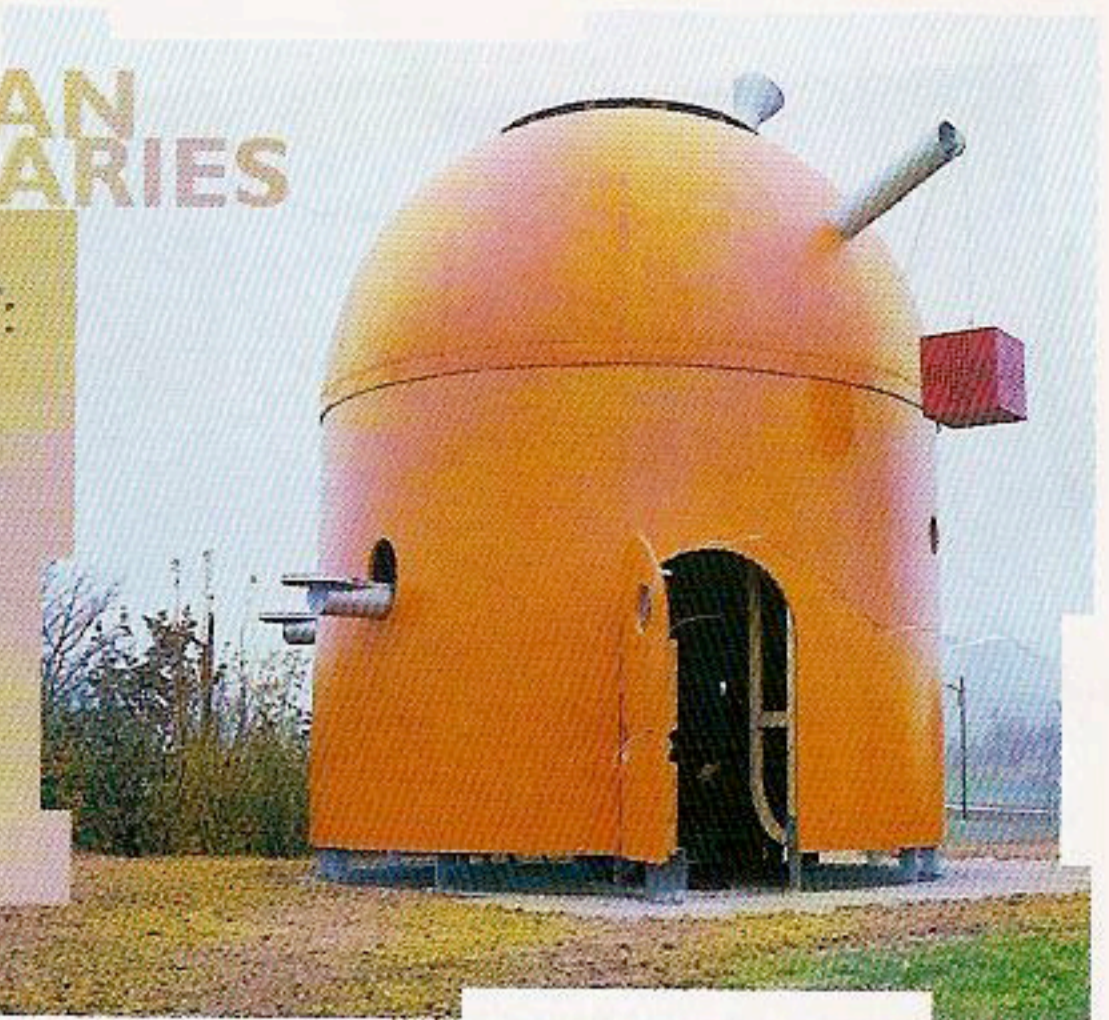
France. Member of the Académie D'Architecture since 1997. Previous works include the Landestheater in Linz, Austria; a football stadium in Siena, Italy and the furniture of the UNESCO Conference Centre in Paris.

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MATALI CRASSET:

France. Matali's previous works include "When Jim Comes To Paris", a felt column that pulls out into a bed for guests. She experiments with traditional living space and expands the uses of traditional objects.



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Cook has designed "hat-and-coat kiosks" – with the roof as the hat, the coat as the body of the structure and openings through which ice-creams and drinks, or fruit, can be offered. The idea is that each individual has something to offer, and in our journey through life we put on our social clothing – our hats and our coats – to do so.

Matali Crasset, French and female like Decq, is well-known for her interiors and the design of individual objects. She conceived, for example, the furniture and fittings, and even the cutlery, for the Hi Hotel in Nice. "To me Danubian is a magic word," she says. "My design incorporates a roof so that people can view the river. People want to have a closer relationship with nature, and that is what I am trying to emphasise in my project."

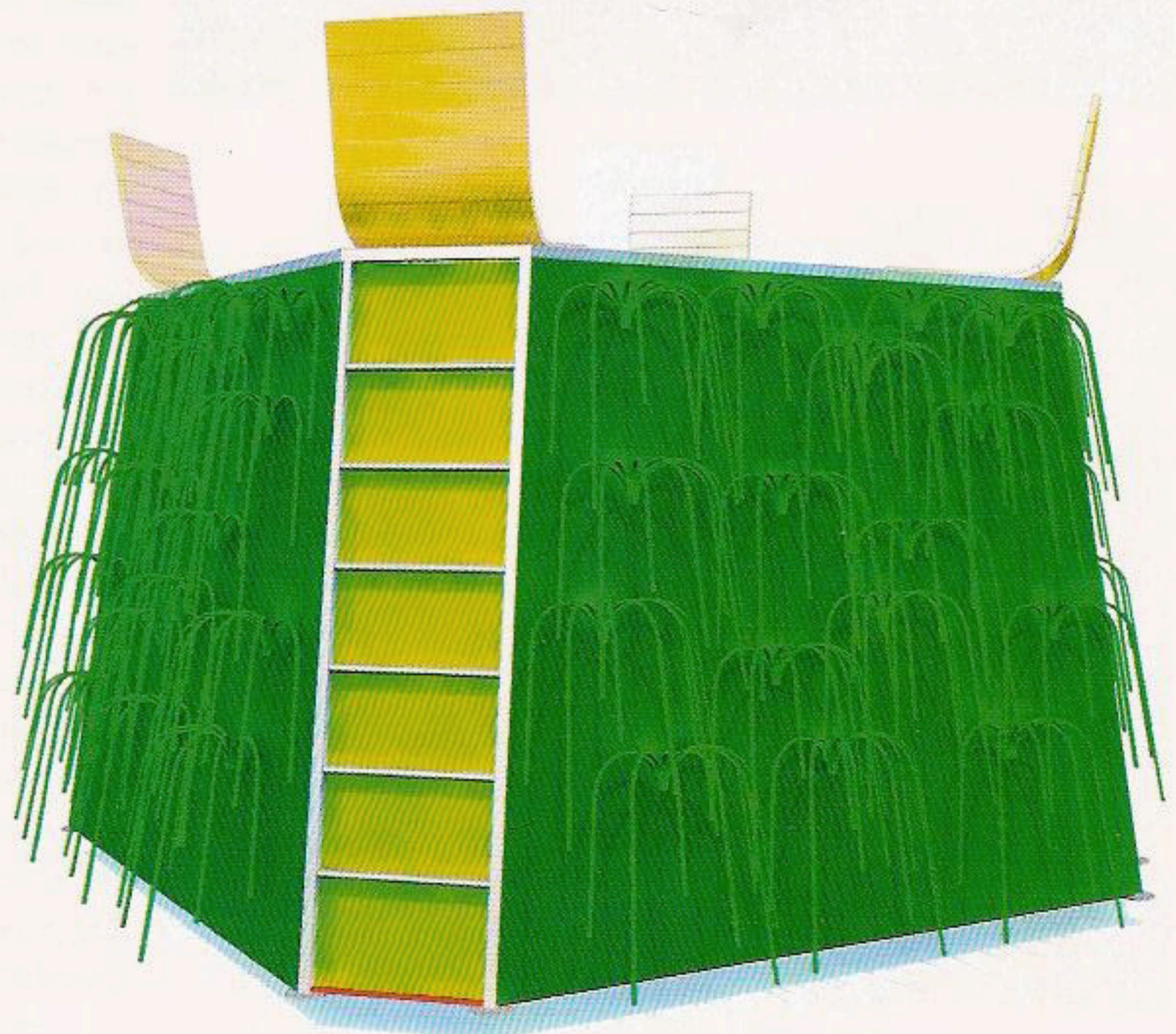
The designs are perfectly practical, usable structures, and seek to integrate people with nature. **Helen and Hard** (Siv Helene Stangeland from Norway and Rheinhard Kropf from Austria) have invented an inflatable giant lilo-like "magic carpet" that can be used as a shelter and as a raft on which to sunbathe or float down the river.

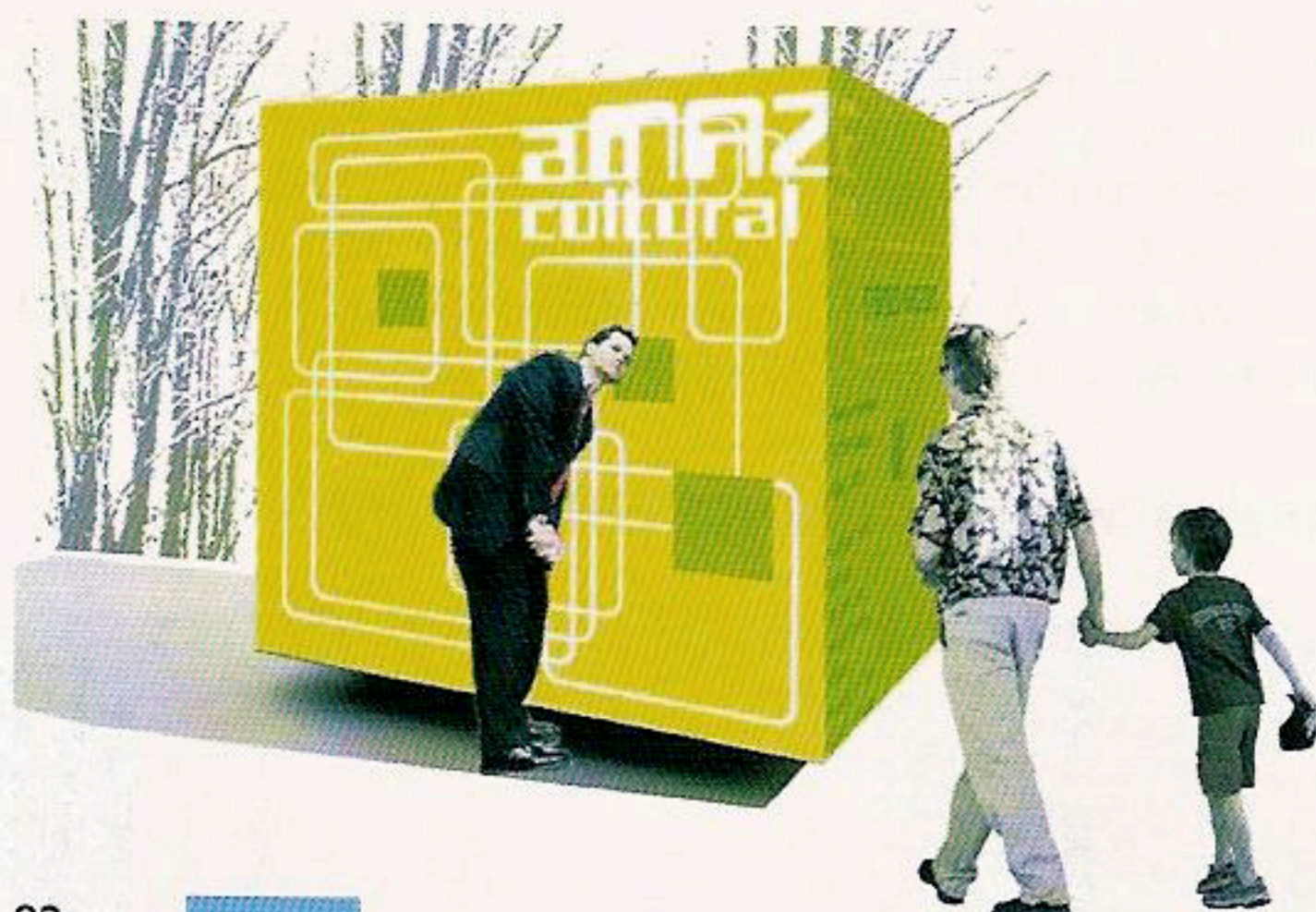
The carpet is made of recyclable EFTE (a polymer of tetrafluoroethylene and ethylene). Its dual purpose means that "it is a personal space in which to live as well as a carpet with which to occupy territory," says Hard.



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HELEN & HARD: Norway/Austria. H & H's work comprises interior design and industrial and town planning projects. Their previous works include urban planning for the eastern part of Stavanger, Norway, and the conversion of old wooden houses into a bakery; 'B' Camp, transforming disused workers' huts into residential units.

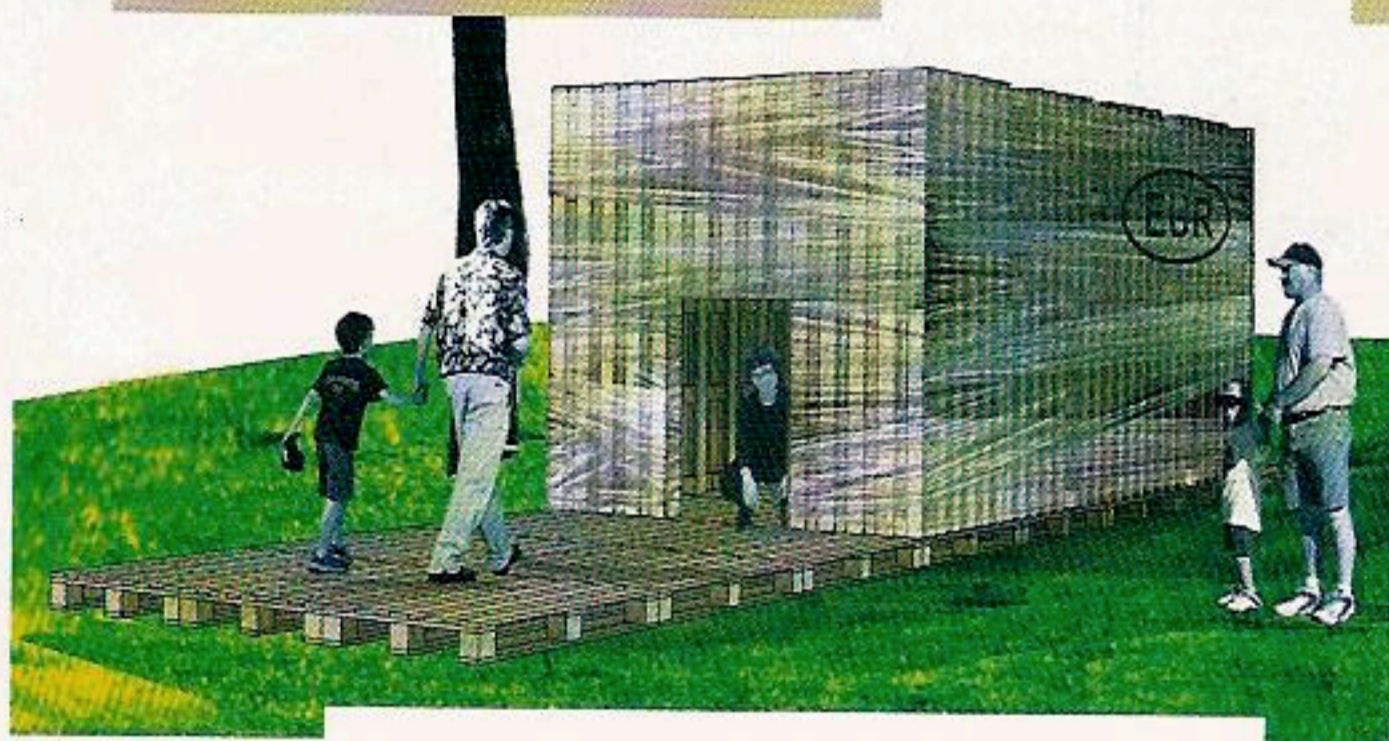




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MEDUSA GROUP: Poland. The group's previous works include the Wilson Centre in Katowice – the conversion of an old industrial site into a modern complex (2005), and the design of detached houses, also in Katowice (2004).



The Danubian Dream cabins represent a possible way of living along the river – modern shelters for modern nomads. Lukasz Zagala of the **Medusa Group** says that their design – the “Bolko Loft” – is a “reflection of contemporary living,” a reference to “global migration” and an open metaphor to be interpreted in any way that the viewer wishes.

The city of Bratislava is represented by the architects **Vallo and Sadovský**, two young Slovaks based in an old factory building a stone's throw from the exhibition area near the Starý most (Old Bridge). Instead of a living/resting space for people, they have thought of man's best friend – the dog.

Vallo and Sadovsky's dog kennel is unlike traditionally shaped dog kennels. It uses the form of a sleeping dog as its blueprint and is thus a curved, rounded structure in which a dog may shelter from Bratislava's simmering summer heat.

“We wanted to look at it from the dog's point of view,” says Matúš Vallo. “It's something that can also be placed in the garden as a statue, or children can play in it,” he says.

From time immemorial the Danube has carried travellers and their dreams of a better life, and this project proves that it will remain a river of dreams well into the 21st century and beyond.



VALLO & SADOVSKÝ:

Slovakia. Two young architects who play in the rock band “Para”. Their previous works include the interior of an organic food store in the Aupark shopping centre, and a roof extension on Dostojevského Ave., both in Bratislava. They cut their architectural teeth in Amsterdam and London.

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Models and plans of the designs for DANUBIAN DREAMS will be on show at the Gandy Gallery in Panenská Street in central Bratislava throughout the duration of the exhibition – 22 June to 1 October 2006.